

the
GREENWICH VILLAGE ORCHESTRA
BARBARA YAHR, MUSIC DIRECTOR

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2018 | 3:00 PM | ALL SAINTS CHURCH



2018-2019 SEASON
MASTERS OF LYRICISM

A NOTE FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

Greetings!

The GVO is proud to present its 2018-2019 Season! This season, we take up residence in the beautiful and historic All Saints Church, on 60th Street between Second and Third Avenues. We are excited to share the stage with stellar soloists from around the country and talent from within the GVO itself. With works by composers from Chris Brubeck, Franz Schubert, Samuel Barber, Gustav Holst, and more, we are thrilled to present a season that explores the many facets of what an orchestra can be. This orchestra is a labor of love for all of us, and we enjoy nothing more than sharing the fruits of our labors with you, our audience.



Barbara Yahr
Music Director and Conductor

Established in 1986, the GVO is a symphony orchestra composed entirely of volunteers. By day, we are accountants, artists, attorneys, carpenters, editors, physicians, professors, programmers, psychologists, retirees, scientists, secretaries, teachers, and writers. As musicians, we are dedicated to bringing the best possible performances of great music to our audiences and are committed to serving the community while keeping our ticket prices affordable.

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The GVO operates on a lean budget — our concerts would not be possible without generous donations from our audiences and our musicians. A gift of any amount enables to the orchestra to:

- Hire our exquisite Music Director, Barbara Yahr;
- Attract the most talented soloists performing in NYC today;
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PROGRAM

Sunday, October 14, 2018 at 3:00 p.m.

Barbara Yahr, Music Director and Conductor

Music Director Chair sponsored by Janice Handler and Norman Ilowite and in memory of Leonard S. Lerman

Rebecca Farley, soprano

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Overture to *The School for Scandal*

Samuel Barber (1910-1981)

Knoxville: Summer of 1915

Rebecca Farley, soprano

— Intermission —

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Symphony No. 9, "The Great"

Andante — Allegro ma non troppo — Più Moto

Andante con moto

Scherzo — Allegro vivace

Finale — Allegro vivace

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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Flash photography is not permitted during the performance.

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

BARBER - OVERTURE TO *THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL*

“My new piece for orchestra goes well, but it is an effort to work at it,” Samuel Barber wrote to his parents in the summer of 1931, when he was studying in Italy. The 21-year-old Barber was at work on his first composition for orchestra: his Overture to *The School for Scandal*, the classic comedy by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) - a play of intrigue propelled by conversational tennis matches, the playwright’s glittering repartee anticipating the bite of Oscar Wilde.

Barber numbered among the first students at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, where he studied piano, composition, and voice. He was also required to take courses in the humanities and immersed himself in his classes on foreign languages and literature at Curtis. Biographer Barbara B. Heyman observes that “virtually all of [Barber’s] large-scale orchestral works, with the exception of the two symphonies, carry literary allusions; yet he would not admit to programmatic intentions even in those cases where he assigned specific literary titles.”

In other words, not too much should be read into the link to Sheridan’s play. Even the genre idea of an “overture” here is a bit misleading. Barber later pointed out that his aim was not at all to write a literal overture. Rather, the piece was intended as “a musical reflection of the play’s spirit.”

Despite tennis matches and hiking expeditions with fellow student (and lover) Gian Carlo Menotti, Barber did manage to complete the work in time for the new semester.

Although the Overture was Barber’s first official orchestral composition, right away he decided to deploy a large apparatus. And he pulled it off with astonishing élan. The piece launches with a piquant dissonance - E-flat minor chords against bright D major - that Barber intensifies with his orchestration, sprinkling the sound of the triangle on top of layered brass and strings.

The rhythmic verve of Barber’s style in this music is also remarkable, while his acclaimed melodic gift is already on display in the solo melody heard first on oboe (and in the reprise on English horn), with a slightly antique modal flavor. From these elements Barber fashions a delightful, well-proportioned, thoroughly confident composition that has proved time and again its efficacy as a concert opener. © Thomas May

BARBER - KNOXVILLE: SUMMER OF 1915

In 1947, when Serge Koussevitsky asked Barber for a work for soprano and orchestra, Barber turned to a James Agee poem. *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, written in 1935, was a sketch of a summer night from Agee's childhood, a time shortly before the death of his father. Barber's choice of text seems to have been deeply personal—both his father and his aunt were ill as he was composing it, and both died within months. The poem's nostalgia, wistfulness, and underlying sadness resonated strongly - as Barber later recalled: "Agee's poem was vivid and moved me deeply, and my musical response that summer of 1947 was immediate and intense. I think I must have composed *Knoxville* within a few days... You see, it expresses a child's feelings of loneliness, wonder and lack of identity in that marginal world between twilight and sleep."

The style of Agee's writing in *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* was deliberately spontaneous - in his program note, he described his process: "I was greatly interested in improvisatory writing, as against carefully composed, multiple-draft writing: i.e., with a kind of parallel to improvisation in jazz, to a certain kind of 'genuine' lyric which I thought should be purely improvised..." The free-flowing style Barber adopted in setting this text, which he described as "lyric rhapsody," fits it perfectly.

Barber's version is laid out in several interconnected sections, tied together with a recurring refrain. After a brief introduction the soprano enters above a softly rocking background, painting a dreamy and gentle portrait of a warm southern night. Barber does a bit of musical wordpainting, as in the mechanical music that introduces a passing streetcar. At "Now is the night one blue dew" the style changes again, to luminous quiet background to the soprano. An echo of the introduction leads into the next panel, a calm picture of the family, lying quietly on quilts "on the rough wet grass of the backyard." Barber gradually interjects a note of darkness as the text hints of the "sorrow of being on this earth." He accompanies the climactic prayer "May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father, oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble; and in the hour of their taking away," with subtly agitated music. The music of the introduction reappears once more for the final section—the sleepy child is put to bed, but the text ends with the uneasy "...but will not ever tell me who I am" before a hushed ending. ©2017 J. Michael Allsen

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

SCHUBERT - SYMPHONY NO. 9, "THE GREAT"

From the standpoint of orchestration, rich thematic material, and sheer majesty, the "Great" C major is the undisputed pinnacle of Schubert's symphonic maturity. Schubert himself thought the work represented his striving for the highest art. Ironically, he never heard the symphony performed. He began composing it in 1825. Despite travels to Steyr, Linz, Salzburg, and Gastein, he still found time to work on the symphony. After he presented the manuscript to Vienna's Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde [Society of the Friends of Music] in 1826, he was rewarded by a stipend "in recognition of his achievements and for further encouragement." In 1827, Schubert had the manuscript copied for the Gesellschaft, still vainly seeking a performance. The Vienna Philharmonic rejected the work, deeming it overly long and too demanding for the players. Even after Schubert's death in 1828, his brother Ferdinand was unsuccessful in his attempts to sell the score to a publisher.

That changed when Robert Schumann called on Ferdinand Schubert during the winter of 1838-1839. Schumann examined the score and was awed by its genius. The discovery prompted his famous letter to Felix Mendelssohn that has given musical posterity the phrase "heavenly length." (Schumann was describing Schubert's inexpressibly lovely Andante.) Mendelssohn conducted the premiere of the symphony with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra on 21 March, 1839. Even with extensive cuts, it still created a sensation. Publication followed in 1840, and the "Great" C major has been standard symphonic repertoire since.

In his earliest symphonies, Schubert relied heavily on Haydn and Mozart for his inspiration and formal guidelines. After the Fourth, his approach was freer, exercising more personal discretion in areas like modulations, formal structure, and proportion, all of which we have come to associate with the romantic (as opposed to classical) symphony. These factors reach their apogee in Schubert's Ninth. It is the strongest symphonic link in the continuum from Beethoven to Brahms, Bruckner, and Mahler.

Schubert was clearly emulating Beethoven's enormous scale. Though he would not have placed such labels as 'classic' or 'romantic' on his own music, the duality between the two styles is one of the "Great" C major's most compelling fascinations.

The use of trombones in all four movements makes it unusual. Formal departures from the norm (the full sonata form of the scherzo movement) break from tradition and confirm the individuality of the symphony. Even the slow introduction, brought to such perfection in the late Haydn symphonies, takes on new character in Schubert's asymmetrical, heroic opening horn theme. Its second measure dotted rhythm provides the impetus for the entire Allegro to follow; his re-integration of that theme into the development section and the coda is one of many felicitous touches in this work so suffused by genius.

The balance of the symphony adheres to classical models. Principal oboe has the main theme in the Andante con moto, which balances march-like elements and brief string outbursts with wistful woodwind writing. In climactic moments, the brasses play with surprising force. Vigorous rhythms drive the Allegro vivace portion of Schubert's Scherzo. He balances the rambunctious opening gesture with a gentler Austrian Ländler [a slow waltz]. The central Trio transports us to the world of folk song and rural village dancing. Schubert's sudden key changes and gentle use of the brass add interest throughout. The grand finale is like a force of nature: as if Schubert had gathered up all world energy and invested it in his orchestra. The glory of Alpine Austria and the great outdoors pulses through this Allegro vivace, bringing Schubert's magnificent symphony to an exuberant close. © Laurie Shulman

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

BARBARA YAHR

Now in her seventeenth season with the GVO, Music Director Barbara Yahr continues to lead the orchestra to new levels of distinction. With blockbuster programming and internationally renowned guest artists, the GVO under Barbara's baton, has grown into an innovative, collaborative institution offering a rich and varied season of classical music to our local community.

A native of New York, Ms. Yahr's career has spanned from the United States to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Her previous posts include Principal Guest Conductor of the Munich Radio Orchestra, Resident Staff Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony under Maestro Lorin Maazel and Music Director of the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra. She has appeared as a guest conductor with such orchestras as the Bayerische Rundfunk, Dusseldorf Symphoniker, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Frankfurt Radio, Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, Janacek Philharmonic, New Japan Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony, and the National Symphony in Washington D.C. She has also conducted the orchestras in Columbus, Detroit, Calgary, Chattanooga, Louisiana, Richmond, New Mexico, Lubbock, and Anchorage, as well as the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, New World Symphony, and the Chautauqua Festival Symphony Orchestra. She has also appeared in Israel conducting in both Jerusalem and Eilat. As an opera conductor, she has led new productions in Frankfurt, Giessen, Tulsa, Cincinnati, Minnesota and at The Mannes School of Music in NYC. Most recently, she has coached the actors on the set of the Amazon Series, *Mozart in the Jungle*, and in October 2016, she conducted the season opener of the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra and led the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra musicians in a free concert of Dvorak and Mozart.

Ms. Yahr is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Middlebury College where she studied piano and philosophy. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Conducting from the Curtis Institute of Music where she studied with Max Rudolf and an MM in Music Theory from the Manhattan School of Music. She was a student of Charles Bruck at the Pierre Monteux School in Hancock, Maine.

A central focus of Ms. Yahr's career has been her commitment to finding new ways to reach a broader population with music. This path ultimately led her to pursuing an MA in Music Therapy at NYU and training at the Nordoff-Robbins Center for Music Therapy in NYC. Her pioneering, community music therapy project, Together in Music, brings orchestral music to the special needs community with uniquely interactive programs presented annually by the GVO.

Barbara is married to Dr. Alexander Lerman and has two adult step children, Abe and Dania, and a 16 year old son, Ben.



REBECCA FARLEY

Rebecca Farley, soprano, has been praised for her poise (Opera News), her “fine, flexible soprano” (Parterre Box), and her “filigree phrasing” (Scoop NZ). She received her master’s degree from The Juilliard School, where she was a Kovner Fellow and, now as an alumna, is a proud recipient of the Novick Career Advancement Grant. At Juilliard she appeared as Bubikopf in Ullman’s *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* and as the stratospheric Controller in Jonathan Dove’s *Flight*. Other operatic credits include Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, and Nannetta in *Falstaff*. Most recently, she made her West Coast debut singing Countess Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* conducted by James Conlon.



Ms. Farley is thrilled to be returning to the Greenwich Village Orchestra this season. She last appeared with GVO in their collaboration of the Verdi *Requiem* with St. George’s Choral Society. She also rejoins St. George’s Choral Society next month for their performance of Haydn’s *Missa Cellensis*.

Ms. Farley made her Carnegie Hall debut December 2016 in Bach’s *Magnificat* with The Cecilia Chorus of New York, an ensemble with whom she returned the next season for Bach’s *Weihnachts-Oratorium*. Another recent Carnegie highlight was a collaboration with Ensemble Connect for Monteverdi’s *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* in which she sang the role of Clorinda.

Last season, Ms. Farley made her Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra debut in a staged concert of Mozart favorites. She took on Fiordiligi, Countess, and Donna Anna all in one night in scenes from *Così fan tutte*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni*. She made her David Geffen Hall debut last March with The National Chorale in Angela Rice’s oratorio *Thy Will Be Done*. This performance included an aria written specifically for Ms. Farley and was the New York premiere of the work. Other notable premieres include Jonathan Breit’s *Der Zippelfaggotist* at Carnegie Hall and Sherry Wood’s *Mara: A Chamber Opera* at The Rubin Museum.

THIS SEASON



Sunday, December 2, 2018, at 3:00 PM
CONCERTI PER TUTTI

Beethoven Triple Concerto in C Major
Lysander Piano Trio
Bartók Concerto for Orchestra

Sunday, December 16, 2018, at 3:00 PM
ALL IN THE FAMILY

Saint-Saëns Carnival of the Animals
...and more!



Sunday, February 24, 2019, at 3:00 PM
EASTERN ROMANCE

Dvorák Romance
Glazunov Concerto for Violin
Ming-Feng Hsin, violin
Rachmaninoff Symphony No. 3

Sunday, April 7, 2019, at 3:00 PM
ORCHESTRAL BRILLIANCE

Debussy *Nocturnes*
Eric Mahl, Assistant Conductor
Brubeck Prague Concerto
George Curran, bass trombone
Strauss Suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*



Sunday, May 19, 2019, at 3:00 PM
THE EARTH IN CONTEXT

Copland *Quiet City*
Phil Parsons, trumpet; Jason Smoller, English horn
Holst *The Planets*

